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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties*

Mongolia

Part one. Introduction

Mongolia is located in the heart of Central Asia and covers an area of 1.6 million square kilometres. The country is bordered by the Russian Federation and China. Its climate is extreme continental, with four seasons. Total population is 2.3 million. Population density is sparse, 15 inhabitants per 1,000 hectares, with 54.7 per cent of the population living in urban areas and 45.3 per cent in rural areas.

As a result of the liberation movement of the Mongolian people in 1911 and the victory of the people's revolution in 1921, Mongolia won independence, and a new period of revival and development started.

Mongolia is a unitary State, administratively divided into the capital and 21 *aimaks*, or provinces. Mongolia acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981. It submitted its second report in 1986. On 31 January 1990 that report was considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. During the seven years since then, the political, social, and economic situation of Mongolia has radically changed.

As a result of democratic changes in 1990, the previous regime was peacefully demobilized, and Mongolia became a country with parliamentary governance and a multiparty system.

In 1996, for the first time in 75 years, general elections brought to power a non-communist, democratic, political force through which a democratic restructuring process has begun.

Mongolia has chosen the path of transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy. The new Constitution of Mongolia, adopted in 1992, guaranteed this choice. Today the country is undergoing the transition to democracy and a market economy, and changes and restructuring are taking place in all realms of social life.

Within the framework of a policy on structural reform, a legislative base for a market economy and a variety of property reforms have emerged. Measures have been taken to improve the structural composition of the health, education and social welfare branches. In the course of these developments, people have become

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Mongolia, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.20. For the second report, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.7.

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confident of having a better life and of the country's advancements through creative work.

Social and economic situation

Until the beginning of 1990, the economy of Mongolia was highly dependent on imports and financial assistance from the former Soviet Union. Dismantling of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) bloc and the cessation of funds from the Russian Federation placed Mongolia in an extremely difficult economic situation. The breakdown of traditional trade ties and deficiencies in essential imports further contributed to the weakening of the economy.

Due to a decline in foreign currency reserves, imports were reduced by two thirds and exports went down by 50 per cent.

This economic and social crisis, conditioned by external changes, made it imperative to pursue a stiff stabilization policy and structural reform.

In 1990-1993 GDP had been declining by 9.4 per cent per year. In the period 1994-1996 the annual growth of GDP was 1.9 per cent, which marked a positive change. The annual rate of inflation reached 325 per cent in 1992, but in 1996, it had dropped to 53 per cent. Prices and exchange rates were stabilized in 1997. For the first time since 1990, in July 1997 the rate of inflation was minus. In 1990-1996 the percentage of private enterprises increased from 6 to 64.

The new coalition Government, formed as a result of 1996 democratic elections, identified in its action programme the following strategic goals to be met by the year 2000 (i.e., during its office term): to revive the economy and increase its self-supporting capability, to create the appropriate structures for a socio-ecological and export-oriented open economy, able to find its place in regional development.

The Government has made steps towards privatization, liberalization of prices and foreign trade, changing the foreign currency rate into the market rate, renovating the tax and banking systems, and reviving laws and regulations within a comparatively short period. Thus, an environment propitious for ensuring macroeconomic stabilization and conducting business has emerged.

Yet, during the process of economic reform and structural adjustment, negative social phenomena such as unemployment, poverty and criminality have proliferated and differences in the standards of living of people have appeared.

Until 1990 the social welfare policy of Mongolia was based on the principle of providing free assistance in education, health protection, disability, old age, childbirth, etc. That system weakened the responsibility of individuals and instilled in them a heavy dependence on the State, ultimately undermining the economy. Uprooting a mentality of dependence on State care and creating a social welfare system appropriate for a market economy is easy.

According to statistical data, the number of jobless increased twice in 1996, compared with 1991. A rise in the number of unemployed contributed to the expansion of poverty.

Considering that the main way to improve the well-being of people and alleviate poverty is to ensure the employment of citizens, an active employment policy aimed at developing human resources and boosting investment has been planned.

With a view to laying down a legal foundation for a reliable source of funding to bring social welfare measures into line with the requirements of the market and guarantee citizens' rights to pensions, allowances and health protection, the Laws on Social Insurance and on Social Care were passed by the State Great Hural.

The Government is planning to implement additional measures for supporting vulnerable groups: setting up appropriate types of safety nets, establishing State-funded hospitals, and providing the poor with shelters in cities and towns and occasionally with fuel and clothes in cold weather.

Within the framework of social welfare measures taken by the Government, a concrete programme targeting various population groups has been developed and is awaiting implementation. The State Great Hural has adopted the Law on the Elderly and their Benefits, the Law on Safety Nets and Care Services to Vulnerable Groups, and the Law on Social Welfare for Invalids and their Benefits.

Mongolia is a country of children and youth: 75 per cent of its population is under 35 years old. Therefore, the Government is responsible for providing

social guarantees for children and youth and creating a favourable environment for their education and development.

The National Action Programme on Child Development until 2000 and the National Programme on Improving the Status of Women were adopted and are being implemented by the Government.

The current status of Mongolian women

Women account for 50.4 per cent of the total population; 54.9 per cent live in cities and towns, and 43.2 per cent in provinces. Girls of 0-15 years make up 43.2 per cent of the total; women of 16-54, 47.4 per cent; and women above 55, 9.4 per cent.

According to figures of the State Statistical Office released in June 1996, women accounted for 48.9 per cent of the able-bodied population and 49.2 per cent of the labour force. They constituted 63.9 per cent of employees working in the educational sector, 67.1 per cent of health and social welfare workers, 41.7 per cent of industrial workers, 37.0 per cent of construction workers, 55.9-64.7 per cent of those engaged in trade, public services, hotels, and catering, 45.9 per cent of those employed in agriculture and animal hunting, 32.0 per cent of transportation and communication employees, 52.4 per cent of those in the financial sector, 37.9 per cent of State civil servants in the domain of public administration and insurance, and 45.5 per cent of those engaged in commercial and population services.

In response to structural adjustment, major changes in the pattern of women's employment have become apparent. In the past few years the number of women employed in the private sector has increased 4.3 times and those running small individual business, 5.8 times. According to a survey conducted by the Union of Private Owners in 1996, 26.6 per cent of private companies were led by women, an increase of 3.3 per cent over 1993 figures.

Women make up 43.1 per cent of those employed in research institutions. Out of 100 secondary schoolchildren, 54 pupils are girls and 46 are boys. Out of 100 secondary schoolteachers, 75 are women and 25 are men. Of 100 directors and vice-directors of secondary schools, 39 are women and 61 are men.

Of 100 employees engaged in vocational training, 54 are women and 46 are men; of the same number of vocational school students, 66 are women and 34, men. Of 100 college pupils, 52 are girls and 48 are boys; of the same number of diploma-course students, 84 are women and 16 are men; of the same number of students in bachelor-degree programmes, 68 are women and 32 are men. Out of 100 postgraduate students for master's and doctoral degrees, 62 are women and 32 are men.

The social crisis accompanying transition to a market economy has hit women harder than men. Today, more than 50 per cent of the unemployed registered with employment regulation offices and actively looking for a job, are women. Of the 69.5 per cent unemployed among youth under 35, young women and girls make up 52.0 per cent. According to statistical data, in transitional years, the level of unemployed women is consistently higher than that of men.

As of May 1997, during the past five years, 119,500 unemployed had found jobs through employment regulation offices. Of them, 55,700, or 46.6 per cent, were women.

Being cognizant of the fact that securing equal rights for women and ensuring their active participation in political, economic and social life constitute key factors in accelerating development, the Government has been following a specific policy on improving the status of women. To that end, a series of measures are being undertaken.

In its policy and activities aimed at advancing the status of women, Mongolia has been creatively considering the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on Political Rights of Women and other conventions relating to women, as well as objectives and concepts put forward by the international community.

In the seven years after the submission of the second report by the Government in 1990, growth had been apparent in the main social indicators measuring the situation of women. But in the 1990s, that growth has been declining, although there are few gender differences in the majority of the indicators.

The Government of Mongolia concludes that the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are being observed in its country.

As a result of democratic developments and reforms, the legislative base for guaranteeing justice, human rights and freedom has expanded in scope. The main laws governing social, economic and legal relations have been adopted. All this has brought about a new understanding of the notion of equal rights for men and women. Free choice, pluralism and transparency, which are conducive to ensuring human rights, have already been established in Mongolian society. Women are becoming more active in protecting their rights and well-being.

External relations and cooperation outside the country are expanding; hence, the opportunities for women to learn about democracy, acquaint themselves with the status of women around the world and share experience are increasing.

Around 170 laws have been passed since the adoption of the new Constitution of Mongolia. In them are many provisions prohibiting gender discrimination. See, for example, article 14, 16 of the Constitution; paragraph 2 of article 1 of the Law on Elections to the State Great Hural; article 19 of the Law on Courts; article 56 of the Code of Civil Procedure; article 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; article 3 of the Law on the Relationship between State and Church; paragraph 1 of article 4 of the Law on Travel Abroad for Private Purposes and Emigration of Mongolian Citizens.

During the process of transition to a market economy, women become property owners and greater opportunities are opening for them to get employment in private business entities and to improve their economic capacity.

Mongolian women have reached a comparably high level in the field of education, culture and health, and it is a real achievement that women enjoy equal rights in the political, socio-economic and intellectual realms. But this, by no means, implies that Mongolia has solved all women-related problems.

Women in Mongolia are suffering more from unemployment and poverty. In particular, the living conditions of women-headed families with many children are difficult. In 1996, the number of women heading families reached 46,000, which showed a twofold increase, compared to 1990. One fourth of these women had six or more children and half of them lived in poverty.

Women's involvement in decision-making has declined sharply, compared with a situation under the previous regime.

Although the infant mortality rate has decreased, the level of maternal mortality has remained constant. According to 1996 figures, of 100,000 deliveries, 33 per cent involved pregnancy, delivery or after-birth complications; 68.4 per cent of fertile-age women suffered from sexually transmitted diseases; and 51.4 per cent of pregnant women with leukaemia were treated with iron acids.

The use of modern methods of family planning was not perceived as a vital need by couples and women.

Phenomena such as prostitution and crime, compounded by a rise in domestic violence and the emergence of street children, are becoming topical issues of Mongolian society during this transitional stage.

Part two. Ongoing measures for improving the status of women and protecting their interests

Proceeding from strategic objectives formulated in the programmes adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and from the country's current state of economic and social development, the Government convened in March 1996 a national forum on women in social development, with a view to upgrading the level of competence, living conditions, education, qualification and culture of Mongolian women and to expanding their involvement in development and progress. In the wake of the national forum, in June 1996 the Government discussed and endorsed the National Programme on Improving the Status of Women.

The Programme focuses on the following areas:

(a) Women and the economy;

(b) Women and poverty;

(c) Living conditions of rural women;

(d) Women and education;

(e) Women and reproductive health;

(f) Women and the household — national traditions;

(g) Involvement of women in management and decision-making;

(h) Violence against women and human rights;

(i) National mechanism for women's affairs;

(j) Women and the mass media.

The national strategy on these key issues, objectives and activities, to be implemented in 1996-2000, was identified in the National Programme.

In ensuring the equal rights of women in political, social and economic relations and in implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in conformity with national specificity, it is important to guarantee the implementation of the National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Women.

Attaching great importance to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the implementation of its decisions, the Government of Mongolia has not only supported the National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Women, adopted by the previous Government, but has also been paying special attention to implementing the Programme in conformity with new circumstances and demands and to alleviating women's poverty. Concrete goals are included in the Government's action programme.

The National Programme of Action for the Advancement of Women is being implemented through programme objectives in laws, regulations, policies, decisions, projects, planning and by executing specific activities. Thus, for instance:

(a) The key issues formulated in the chapters "Women, household and national traditions" and "Women and the economy" of the National Programme have been included, with due consideration of shifts and needs emerging in family relations, in the draft Law on Family, which has already been submitted to the State Great Hural;

(b) Objectives put forward in the chapter "Women and reproductive health" have been refined in the national programme on reproductive health and the health of pupils and adolescents;

(c) With a view to setting trends for gender research and understanding in working out and implementing governmental decisions, a new project has been formulated and presented to UNDP for cooperative execution;

(d) The objectives in regard to poverty alleviation identified in the National Programme have been enriched in the revised draft national programme on poverty alleviation, which is now pending the Government's resolution;

(e) Issues pertaining to the improvement of the social status of women are to be included in the new draft document on national policy on social welfare;

(f) The draft law on amendments to the Law on Pensions and Benefits from the Social Insurance Fund, envisaging the right to pregnancy and maternal benefits, has been worked out;

(g) In order to adapt the Labour Code of 1991 to the newly emerged market relations, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has drafted a package of laws on labour, which have already been passed on for the Government's consideration;

(h) Considering that the issue of fixing and modifying the minimum wage is an important tool of State bodies for improving the living conditions of people and for setting social welfare standards, the Government prepared the Law on the Minimum Wage Level and submitted it to the State Great Hural;

(i) Recently the Law on Transferring to Five Working Days was adopted by the State Great Hural, and the Labour Code was accordingly amended. The Law entered into force on 1 January 1998;

(j) With a view to increasing attention and care for vulnerable groups of the population, the Government has set up a new system of social welfare and safety nets. The pertinent amendments have been made to the Law on Social Care.

This year 7.2 billion tugriks will be spent on measures for social safety nets. This amount is 2.3 times more than the 1996 expenditure. In the first half of 1997, 33,141 mothers received pregnancy and maternal benefits from the social care fund, at a cost of 741 million tugriks, and 35,211 mothers received the childcare benefits, at a cost of 676.9 million tugriks.

Moreover, 13.9 million tugriks were spent for infants' care benefits, and 424.9 million tugriks have been disbursed for the payment of allowances to 56,617 large families.

The secretariats of the provincial Governors have been preparing and implementing subprogrammes on improving the status of women.

In support of the Mongolian Women's Federation initiative, the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and the Chair of the National Council for Women's Affairs passed a decision to conduct monthly nationwide campaigns on the protection of women's interests and health (in March), on support to family well-being (in May), on population and human development (in July) and on prevention of HIV/AIDS and STD (in December).

It should be noted that the implementation of this national programme is sluggish, mainly due to financial constraints.

According to the Government's decision, the most pressing programme objectives should be included in annual state and local plans and budgets. They should also be addressed by means of developing concrete projects and fund-raising, or through coordinating such projects with other nationwide programmes so as to secure resources. However, this course of action is not always supported by the state organizations and administrations, which leads to a failure in the performance of planned activities. In eliminating these shortcomings, measures on developing the national mechanism for women's issues and improving the gender knowledge of men, who dominate at the decision-making level, will be of great significance.

National mechanism for women's issues

Since 1990, the national mechanism for women's issues has undergone major changes. Prior to 1990, there was only one such organization, combining features of state and mass organizations.

The current mechanism for women's issues has the following structure:

(a) Within the supreme body of State power — i.e., the State Great Hural — the Standing Committee for Social Policy is responsible for women's issues. A parliamentary group of female MPs has been set up and is now operational;

(b) Within the Cabinet, women's issues fall under the purview of the Minister for Health and Social Welfare. In the Department of Strategic Management and Planning of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare there is an officer in charge of the matter. Moreover, a group of officers responsible for women's issues is now functioning;

(c) At the local level, staff in charge of women, youth and family issues are employed in the Social Policy Departments in the secretariats of 21 provincial Governors;

(d) The Department for Youth, Family and Women, handling policy implementation issues, was established at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in 1996;

(e) The Department for Children, Youth and Women, with a full-time staff in charge of policy implementation, was accordingly established in the secretariat of the mayor of the capital city. Full-time officers handling issues involving children, youth and women are working at the primary administrative units — i.e., *soums* and districts;

(f) By the Government's decision, the National Council for Women's Affairs, headed by a Cabinet member, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, was established at the end of 1996, and its operational by-laws were accordingly adopted. the Council is made up of MPs, officials of ministries concerned, representatives of women's non-governmental organizations, voluntary movements, mass organizations, owners of private companies, business and cooperative entities. The Council is the highest national authority on women's affairs, assuming the role of a national institution with monitoring functions over the implementation of the National Programme on Improving the Status of Women. In the future, this framework will be further refined;

(g) As progress towards democracy is made, Mongolian women are becoming increasingly active in political and social activities and they join voluntary movements and unions. At present, around 30 women's non-governmental organizations operate in the country. These organizations work on the implementation of various projects aimed at empowering women in terms of their political education, legal knowledge and life

skills. They carry out various seminars, discussions on household income-generation, creation of new jobs etc. By supporting such activities, they contribute greatly to the implementation of governmental policy and decisions. Moreover, they lobby the Government on topical issues relating to women, family and society as a whole.

The first Congress on Women's Non-governmental Organizations, initiated by the Liberal Women's Brain Pool (LEOS) was held in October 1996. Organization of the first national congress of women's non-governmental organizations in October 1996, at the initiative of the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, was an important catalyst for activating public participation, in particular, involvement of women themselves, and mobilization of cooperation between governmental agencies concerned and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the National Program on Improving the Status of Women.

Moreover, project activities carried out with the financial assistance of the Government of Australia by the Women's Information Research Centre and the Centre against Violence, which were established jointly by the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, Women for Social Progress Movement, and Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association, are rightfully appreciated by women and contribute enormously to the implementation of the Government's policy.

Information and research are crucial for strengthening the existing national mechanism.

The National Statistical Office regularly releases figures on about 40 indicators relating to women, such as health, reproductive status, mortality rate, labour resources, education, coverage by social insurance and safety nets, family and children.

However, these indicators cannot satisfy the need for contemporary gender information and research. Thus, a number of important indicators are not compiled by sex (e.g. differences in wages, bank loans, time spent at the workplace and remunerated by salary and time invested in housework, hence not rewarded in monetary terms). The Government of Mongolia intends to take concrete measures to establish specialized research services and networks mandated with collecting and processing gender information and surveys, and to strengthening further the existing Women's Information and Research Centre.

Participation of women in decision-making

The declining role of women at the higher echelons of political and economic leadership implies that the objectives formulated in the Nairobi Declaration on improving the status of women worldwide are not properly achieved in Mongolia. It is especially unfair, given the education level of Mongolian women, and it may be regarded as an underestimation of their potential contribution to the country's progress and development. On the other hand, it should be admitted that women themselves lack initiative. In light of this, increasing women's participation in decision-making is perceived as one of the key objectives in the advancement of women nationwide.

At present, 9.2 per cent of MPs are women, which shows a threefold reduction compared to the previous parliament. No woman holds a ministerial portfolio; there are no women State secretaries, ambassadors or provincial governors. Women account for 7.5 per cent of heads of ministerial departments and divisions. Women make up 17.6 per cent of the Justices of the Supreme Court, 42 per cent of provincial and city judges, 63.8 per cent of *soum* and district judges. These figures show that in the area of administration of justice, the percentage of women decreases as the level of decision-making goes up.

Our country hopes to increase the percentage of women in parliament and government in the near future, by 10 per cent and later by 20 per cent. To this end, the Government endeavours in all possible ways to encourage the parties to take concrete steps to promote and support women in acquiring management knowledge and skills through various forms of training and the mobilization of women's non-governmental organizations.

Women's rights are human rights

Ensuring the equal rights of men and women within the framework of social, economic, political, cultural and family relations has been one of the fundamental principles of State policy of Mongolia.

According to the Constitution of Mongolia and other legislation adopted in conformity with it, every man and woman has the right to education,

employment, medical service, pension and benefits, freedom of choosing the place of residence, participation in the government of the country directly or through representative bodies, and to elect and be elected to the State bodies.

As stated in the Constitution of Mongolia, "The State shall be responsible to the citizens for the prevention of violations of human rights and freedoms and restoration of infringed rights." According to the Criminal Code of Mongolia, forcing women to enter into marriage, obstructing divorce, forcing women to have abortions, involving women and girls in prostitution, or compelling women to have sexual intercourse shall be considered a crime and liable to imprisonment. The Family Law prohibits husbands from demanding a divorce while their wives are pregnant or their children are under one year old.

In administering the policy on protecting women's rights the Government follows the common principle of providing women with equal opportunities with men in all aspects of social life. At the same time, it realizes the importance of assisting women in creating settings favourable for combining employment with housework.

As stated in the Labour Code, it is prohibited to dismiss, at the initiative of the administration, pregnant women and mothers with children under two years of age. Mothers shall be entitled to pregnancy and maternity leaves of 45 and 56 days before and after delivery, respectively. Those women who have complicated deliveries or deliver twins shall be given 70 days of maternity leave, with the full maintenance of their salaries for that period. If so desired, mothers may be granted childcare leaves until their babies reach two years of age (in the case of twins, three years), with appropriate benefits. During the leaves, their jobs or posts shall be kept. Under article 149 of the Criminal Code, refusal to hire pregnant women or mothers with babies, laying them off or reducing their salary shall be punished by correctional work or a fine.

According to the general requirements established in the Law on Social Insurance (entered into force on 1 January 1995), women who have paid the pension insurance contributions for a period not less than 20 years and reached the age of 55 shall have the right to retire with pension benefits. The pension age for women is five years lower than that for men. Mothers who have given birth or adopted (under the age of three) four or more children and raised them to the age of six and have paid the pension insurance contributions for a period of not less than 20 years and have reached the age of 50 shall be entitled to retire with pensions benefits. It appears that this regulation is conditioned by a national characteristic of Mongolia, as a country with a sparse population where the majority of women deliver more than three children and raise them while working. The right of women to retire earlier than the general standard age is based on the principle of flexibility; thus women may retire only if they so desire.

A special provision in the Criminal Code against obstructing the exercise by women of their equal rights with men envisages the imposition of imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or of a fine in the amount of from 25,000 to 30,000 tugriks for preventing women from realizing their rights to study, work and participate in political, economic and cultural life on equal terms with men, by use of force or threat of force, or by taking advantage of the state of women's dependence, material or otherwise.

In such ways the legal base for ensuring the equal rights of women has been basically laid down. However, in reality, legal violations and disparities in the social roles of men and women still linger, and the disparities have tended to become more apparent of late. Thus, for instance, one may cite the above-mentioned decreasing percentage of women participating in decision-making and the growing violence against women. Women continue to encounter overt and covert obstacles to exercising their rights.

In the majority of instances, women suffer due to a lack of legal knowledge about their rights. It is, therefore, essential to arrange activities aimed at expanding legal aid counselling for women and increasing their human rights awareness and to train professionals specialized in women's rights.

It is of great importance to bring about a framework that will allow women to upgrade their legal education and knowledge, provide them with the requisite information, and enable them to monitor the implementation of pertinent laws and regulations. With a view to creating a legal environment conducive to the consistent implementation of human rights, the State Great Hural of Mongolia plans to adopt new, revised texts of the Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, Law on Executive of Court Decisions, Law

on Advocacy, and Law on Free Press and Information. The Subcommittee on Human Rights operations within the structure of the State Great Hural. Additional measures for furthering the national mechanisms for human rights will be taken in the future. All will be crucial for insuring compliance with CEDAW provisions at the national level.

Policy and action for promoting women's employment

In implementing its policy on reducing unemployment, the Government of Mongolia supports the employment of women by giving priority to granting them bank loans and assisting them in self-employment.

During the past four years the Government has adopted several major resolutions for ameliorating employment and relieving unemployment. The national programme on unemployment alleviation reflects the gamut of specific activities being implemented.

The Government takes measures to involve women widely in the project activities and training, focusing on the creation of workplaces and income generation schemes, which are being administered in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, UNDP and UNFPA.

In the period 1992-1995 soft loans totalling 160 million tugriks were disbursed to the unemployed from the Fund for the Creation of Work Places, established by the Government of Mongolia, as a result of which more than 2,000 new jobs designed for women were created.

Moreover, proposals and initiatives of non-governmental organizations on creating jobs for women receive all-round support. Thus, the representatives of the Liberal Women's Brain Pool and the Federation of Mongolian Women sit in the coordination committee of the project on the creation of workplaces.

With a view to generating an income for women, especially heads of households and low income women with many children — the Government of Mongolia is implementing, in cooperation with UNFPA and ILO, a project to provide 1,470 women with jobs. The project sites are three *soums* of Central and Dornogobi provinces and eight districts of the capital city. Thus far, more than 1,300 women have been taught and provided with opportunities to process wool and cashmere, manufacture some finished products, design and sew Mongolian and European-style clothes, plant vegetables and produce noodles.

As a result of privatization in the agricultural sector, some positive shifts have become apparent in rural life: women who are heads of households have become property owners. However, those women began to face difficulties in meeting their needs for rest, study and health protection. The fact that the level of cultural and communal services in rural areas has deteriorated and the absence of comfortable settings for work and living are increasingly causing internal migration of the rural population to urban areas. Given this situation, it is incumbent on the Government to take measures to provide all possible opportunities for ensuring adequate health service to rural women, upgrading their qualifications and access to information, increasing their income and access to loans, and involving them in social life.

More scientific research and study on the workloads of herdswomen are needed. In general, surveys and analyses are required in regard to people engaged with home-based work, most of whom are women. It is obvious from a small-scale selective survey conducted in the middle of this year by the Department for Youth, Family and Women of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare that it is necessary to improve the legal knowledge of home-based employees and their working conditions, to furnish them with needed information and to assist in terms of finances. It is hoped that the results of a survey on the participation of women in the economy, carried out by the Women's Information Research Centre will find due reflection in the Government's policy and decisions.

In 1969 Mongolia acceded to ILO Convention No. 100 on equal remuneration; Recommendation No. 90; Convention No. 103, on the protection of mothers; Convention No. 111, on non-discrimination in employment; and Recommendation No. 111.

The Constitution of Mongolia, the Labour Code and other legislation guarantee a legal base for the implementation of the above Conventions.

The principle of providing equal pay to men and women occupying similar positions is spelled out in the Labour Code.

Article 6 under chapter I, "General provisions", of the Labour Code reads "It is prohibited to make any direct or indirect distinction, exclusion or preference in labour relations on account of social origin and status, race, colour, national extraction, sex, religion, property status or political opinion", which is further secured by other relevant laws and legislation. There is a special chapter "Employment of women and young persons" in the Labour Code which contains concrete provisions on ensuring and protecting the employment rights of pregnant women, women with infants, single mothers, or fathers who have children under 16 years.

The Law on Transferring to a Five-day Working Week was adopted on 4 December 1997 by the State Great Hural, and all economical, business entities and organizations began to follow the law, starting from 1 January 1998. This law is of great importance for boosting human development, by freeing up leisure time for citizens which may be invested in developing mental and physical abilities, protecting health, broadening knowledge, and bringing up children.

With a view to reflecting in legislation changes emerging in multiparty labour relations in connection with the transition to market relations, a draft package of laws on labour has been elaborated by the Government and submitted to the State Great Hural.

The laws and regulations of Mongolia do not contain any provisions having the effect of differentiating wages on the basis of sex; hence, it may be inferred that the right to equal pay for equal work is practised without any discrimination.

But differences in the salaries of men and women do exist, due to the features and difficulty of their labour. Thus, for instance, men are mostly engaged in laborious physical work and occupy high-ranking positions, which are paid more, while women are employed in trade and service work, such as communal services and catering. They dominate in low-profile positions like nursing, servicing and cleaning, which are paid less. No petitions or information regarding different pay for equal work have been registered so far.

The National Statistical Office does not compile detailed information about wages by sex. Comparison of the average wages of employees in the trade and service sectors where mostly women are employed, and employees in the mining, power and water supply sectors and construction industries, where mostly men are engaged, revealed that the former are paid 25-50 per cent less.

With a view to eliminating the factors that might adversely affect the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work, the Government of Mongolia has been undertaking a series of measures to improve the efficiency of women employees. For example, the Government is attempting to:

(a) Provide women with education and legal aid, give them a professional orientation, involve them in vocational training, support them financially in finding a job and grant them soft loans;

(b) Guarantee equal employment opportunities for men and women, to provide women with possibilities for promotion to decision-making positions.

The Government pays due attention to the protection of women labour which is guaranteed by the Labour Code and other relevant laws and regulations. In 1991 the Government passed a resolution to detail the provisions, indicating workplaces where the employment of women is prohibited and weights that may not be lifted by women. With the adoption of these lists by the Government, the pertinent provisions of the ILO Convention No. 45 of 1935 and Convention No. 136 (Working Conditions of Nurses) of 1971, and Recommendation No. 157 have been taken into consideration.

The Department of Labour and Social Protection of the Ministry of Health and Social Care conducted a nationwide survey in 1987 to find out the level of labour safety. The results are now being wrapped up. The survey covered 191,978 workers (of which 49 per cent were women), in 4,953 industrial and business entities. According to incomplete data, in the first half of 1996, of 260 workers involved in industrial accidents, 30.5 per cent were women.

In line with decisions of the Fourth World Conference on Women, representatives of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations concerned participated in seminars and training sessions on women's employment and professional training, organized by ILO and ESCAP.

At the end of 1996, in cooperation with the ILO regional bureau in Bangkok, a tripartite seminar on enhancing the employment of women was conducted in Mongolia, and its recommendations are being

implemented. In the course of the seminar, participants were acquainted with the experience and activities of Asian countries regarding the expansion of women's employment.

In 1996, in collaboration with the World Bank and UNDP, high-level seminars, forums and training on poverty and social care, the participation of men and women in development, microcredit and the use of gender in policy planning were organized. Presentations on supporting women's employment, furthering their economic situation and alleviating poverty were delivered and brainstormed, resulting in decisions with clearly specified targets.

As a follow-up to the world summit on microcredit, held in 1997, the Government of Mongolia initiated in June of the same year a national forum on microcredit, with financial support from UNDP, at which an important final document about mobilizing a microcredit movement throughout the country was adopted. It is now being implemented. UNDP contributed US$ 1,000,000 to the microcredit fund, thereby becoming the first sponsor. Thus, Mongolia came to be the twenty-fifth country-recipient participating in the "Micro Start" global programme on microcredit administered by UNDP.

Growth of a microcredit movement is crucial for alleviating poverty, in particular, for creating appropriate business opportunities for poor households, and for women with many children.

Recently the State Great Hural passed laws ratifying ILO Conventions No. 155, on safe labour activity and industrial conditions, and No. 159, on professional rehabilitation and employment of invalids.

The following problems are being encountered in the process of improving women's employment:

(a) Economic settings propitious for furthering women's employment and reducing female unemployment have not improved thus far at a macroeconomic level;

(b) Only a minority of the female population is covered by ongoing projects on advancing women's employment;

(c) The workplace and the remuneration of women running a private business or employed in the private sector are insecure, and their working conditions are not acceptable in terms of safety and hygiene;

(d) A reluctance to hire women and a tendency to lay them off first still persist in practice;

(e) The loan mechanisms designed for women are imperfect; and credit funds are deficient. A mechanism for informal training and retraining is not yet in place. The material base of education is insufficient;

(f) Labour statistics do not reflect the full contribution of women to the economy; information and research on gender-related issues are scarce;

(g) The role of women at the level of economic decision-making leaves much to be desired.

To eradicate the above-listed problems, the Government and business owners, as well as trade unions and non-governmental organizations, work in concert to bring to reality the objectives identified in the National Programme on Improving the Status of Women, the National Programme on Poverty Alleviation, the National Programme on Unemployment Reduction.

Insuring women's right to education

Providing men and women with education, without discrimination, with equal opportunities for acquiring a specialization, upgrading professional knowledge and developing their intellect has been perceived by Mongolia as one of the most important parts of State policy.

As provided in the Constitution of Mongolia, every citizen of the country is entitled to receive general, secondary education free of charge. The newly revised Law on Education, adopted in 1995, states that "Citizens shall not be discriminated against on the basis of ethnic origin, language, race, age, sex, social origin, property status, occupied position, religion or opinion, in exercising their right to education. They shall be provided with opportunities to study in their mother language ...", "... citizens shall enjoy equal rights in education."

Mongolia acceded to the Convention against Discrimination in Education in 1964. It has started implementing a master programme on educational development which had been worked out with the

assistance of the Asian Development Bank. A united policy on educational development and a national programme on information education have also been elaborated. Moreover, guidelines on education-sector reforms in 1997-2000 are being consistently followed so as to bring about the desired structural changes. Nowadays, after 20 per cent of students study at private educational establishments. Meaningful activities in professional education and at industrial centres for unoccupied youth with 8-10 years of schooling are also being undertaken.

Realizing that investing in the formal and informal education of the people is one of the proven ways to ensure sustainable economic development, the Government has envisaged in its action programme spending not less than 20 per cent of its budget for education. In 1998, for example, it has planned to disburse 22 per cent of the budget for educational needs.

Formal education

According to the Law on Education, the educational structure of Mongolia has four tiers: pre-school, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Basic education covers grades 1-8 and is compulsory for everyone. The Laws on Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education were passed by the State Great Hural in 1995.

Owing to the favourable conditions accorded to them by the State, women account for a majority of students and graduates in virtually all levels of schooling.

As 1996 figures show, women represented 62.0 per cent of postgraduates doing a Master's and higher degrees, 68.1 per cent of undergraduates doing a Bachelor's degree, 84.0 per cent of diploma course students, 52.0 per cent of primary and intermediate professional school students, 54.0 per cent of secondary school pupils.

Likewise, more than half of the teaching personnel at all levels of schooling are females.

These figures clearly attest to the peculiarity of gender indicators in the educational sector. However, it does not mean that education of the Mongolian women is impeccable. Due to their limited possibilities to benefit from retraining, part-time study or evening classes or to be covered by a system of continuous education after their first graduation, women rank lower than men according to the level of post-diploma education. Thus, in 1996, females made up only 12.3 per cent of scholars with titles.

Often education and the specialization acquired by women do not meet their working and living needs. This is illustrated by numerous examples, in both urban and rural areas, when women with higher education, such as doctors, teachers, or engineers, prefer for certain periods of time not to work in their profession.

Informal education

Expanding informal education designed for women is one of the important ways of elevating the level of women's education and furthering their equal right to education. In offering informal education for women, it is essential that curricula be flexible, based on their needs, in an accessible and open form.

During the current transitional stage, forms of informal education are taking shape. Thus, the Ministry of Enlightenment, in cooperation with UNESCO, developed and implemented in 1994-1996 a project on informal education for meeting the educational needs of Gobi women cattle-breeders, which reached 15,000 women in five provinces. The project has been evaluated and found to be appropriate for improving the level of education and culture and life skills of Mongolian women herders, sparsely located througnout the country. The project also broadened the view of education as no more than scientific knowledge. It demonstrated that education is complex, should address multifaceted aspects of human life and activities, and covers subjects ranging from healthy livelihood to family management and child-rearing.

The general public appreciated that the training programmes were broadcast repeatedly on radio which increased their outreach far beyond the women herders. As a result, urban and rural people alike, including men and children, benefited from them, learning a lot in terms of general knowledge and life skills in a market environment. Therefore, the Government intends to continue its cooperation with UNESCO on the extension of the project with a view to larger target groups and refined curricula.

A variety of training activities are also carried out by a host of women non-governmental organizations such as the Liberal Women's Brain Pool, Women for

Social Progress Movement, Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association etc.

Two years have elapsed since the opening of Mother Oulen, a private college for women. Its purpose is to prepare activists for women organizations and diligent housewives.

There are many topical issues that need resolution if the level of women's education is to be upgraded and their right to education is to be exercised to the fullest.

In recent years there have been about 100,000 school drop-outs, of which approximately 40 per cent are girls. Reductions in the number of childcare institutions and kindergartens and the loss of cheap social care have adversely affected the capacities of women to continue their education. Household and cultural services for facilitating the workload of women herders are insufficient. With the introduction of tuition fees for professional schooling in 1992, children from poor households and single parent families have been facing difficulties in acquiring professional educations.

Activities to assist in updating the professional knowledge of women who have been on extended leave in order to provide childcare or look after aged parents or ill family members and in providing technical training for young women, in line with both government and non-governmental organizations, are next to non-existent.

All the above-mentioned obstacles and shortcomings are expected to be overcome with the achievement of objectives specified in the Government's action programme, the national programmes on child development and on poverty alleviation.

In view of this, developing the educational sector, creating a system that enables everyone to get an education according to his or her talent, interest and capability, improving the material bases of schools and kindergartens, eliminating school drop-outs by perfecting informal education, and widening study opportunities for men and women alike are the needs of the hour.

Poverty alleviation

During the past seven years of transition to market relations, poverty has become apparent, with a rise in unemployment, a decline in the real income of the population and depreciation of the standard of living. It has been aggravated by a number of negative social phenomena, such as the deterioration in the health of poor people due to poor nutrition, school leaving caused by a disruption in the normal functioning of educational and cultural establishments, and an increase in crime, and in the moral decay of adults, resulting in more and various forms of violence.

A nationwide survey conducted in 1997 revealed that 25.2 per cent of the population lived in poverty. Of all the households hit by poverty and unemployment, 9.5 per cent were families led by women, with a large number of children; 47.5 per cent of the poor were children aged 0-16 and 10.9 per cent were elderly. Of the poor, 48.9 per cent were discovered to be extremely impoverished.

The Law on Pensions was amended in 1990 with a provision allowing mothers with four or more children to "retire", irrespective of their age. Although the law provides for retirement at "one's own request", in reality this clause has become an excuse for dismissing women under the pretext of staff reduction. About 50,000 women affected by this activity have slipped into poverty.

In addition, removing pregnancy and maternity benefits from a social insurance scheme and placing them under the Law on Social Care at a level below the minimum standard of living was a major step backward from the previous arrangement. The new Government is now working on rectifying these mistakes committed by the former Government.

In its action programme the Government set a target to ensure twofold reduction in the current poverty rate by the year 2000 by increasing employment and economic growth. To that end, a series of consecutive measures are being taken.

Implementation of the national programme on poverty alleviation constitutes one of the main goals of State policy on poverty relief.

The national programme on poverty alleviation contains a chapter on palliation of female poverty. To achieve its objectives a Fund for Women's Advancement has been set up, within which a US$ 700,000 UNDP-funded project on support for women was launched. Moreover, it has been decided to spend US$ 28,400 for gratis aid under the New Zealand

project Social care for extremely poor single mothers with many children.

Apart from the above-mentioned Fund, there are three other funds from which projects targeting women are being administered — funds for local development, for generating employment and for care.

The national programme on poverty alleviation is expected to be implemented in two phases: 1994-1996 and 1997-2000. During the first phase, about 1,018 projects focused on generating income for vulnerable groups of the population, addressing 8,500 households, composed of 33,800 members. Of the 7,519 persons who were provided with permanent jobs, 52 per cent were women, of which 28 per cent were women heading households. In the provinces activities on making maternal places comfortable and improving the quality of offered service are also being undertaken within the framework of the national programme on poverty alleviation.

In implementing the national programme on poverty alleviation the Government channels aid to vulnerable groups of population through the insurance and social care systems. Thus, in 1996, 3.1 billion tugriks, or US$ 3.9 million, was spent for social care purposes and care centres, and in 1997 the expenditures showed a twofold increase.

Social care benefits and pensions are directed to the disabled, lonely elderly, invalids, the poor, families with four or more children, the unemployed, and those with an income providing less than the established minimum standard of living. Pregnancy and maternal benefits, monthly allowances for infant care, benefits for families with four or more children under 16, for mothers who delivered twins or adopted an orphan are paid from the fund for social care. Expenses associated with the establishment and operation of houses for the elderly and dormitory schools for orphans, for professional training and rehabilitation of invalids are also covered from the State budget. Along with this, various forms of support service, such as the provision of housing, wood and coal for the elderly etc. are provided.

More than half of the recipients of money from the fund for social care are women, in particular, those heading families with a large number of children.

Work on alleviating poverty among women is based on the active involvement of women non-governmental organizations; the initiative, creativity and assistance of local authorities, and extensive participation by the poor women themselves.

Decisions adopted by the national summits, seminars and forums on poverty and social care and on microcredit, organized with the support of the World Bank and UNDP, are being implemented according to schedule.

Being cognizant of the importance of focusing upon the family, which is the primary unit of any society, and on economic entities in the fight against poverty, the Government orients its activities towards changing the current inert status of poor families living below the poverty line, as mere recipients of aid. The Government plans to promote projects aimed at generating a permanent source of living for poor women through microcredit which would create new workplaces, develop small-size enterprises, provide livestock and land, and set up cooperatives. It also intends to carry out activities on ensuring the combined implementation of environmental projects with projects on income generation for poor households. Other activities to that end include provision of primary medical aid to extremely poor women and households, assistance to their children in acquiring education and training in basic economic and legal matters.

Guaranteeing the equal right of women and mothers to a healthy life and to the protection of health

In the previous report it was mentioned that the Law on Health Protection had been amended in 1989 with a provision providing for a woman's right to decide whether to have children or not. Mongolia has traditionally held a position of non-discrimination on the basis of sex as the core of its policy and activities in the health sector, yet it also conceives of a woman as special because she is a mother.

The Law on Health Protection specifically states that "special attention should be accorded to the protection of women's health, to the full coverage of all pregnant women by medical supervision, to ensuring that all deliveries are attended by trained personnel, and to the provision for mothers and children of preventive professional assistance".

The above priorities are still valid. The Law on Medical Insurance which has been in effect since 1994 envisages that expenses for inoculation and pre-natal, delivery and post-natal treatment and analysis shall be borne by the State.

The health insurance contributions of mothers looking after infants are covered by the State budget. Since the establishment of maternal houses for two weeks of treatment and rest for women before and after delivery, over 90 per cent of herdswomen deliver their babies there.

Beginning in 1996 the Government's decision to bear the expense of medical service offered to the homeless, street people or very poor people has been put into effect.

The State Great Hural passed the Laws on Combating HIV/AIDS and Tobacco Harm in 1993 and the Law on Combating Alcoholism in 1994. As follow-up, an official order of the President on reinvigorating the implementation of the laws and fighting criminality was issued, in line of which pertinent measures have been taken.

By the Government's resolution No. 149, dated 17 September 1993, the national programme on immunization was approved and, accordingly, vaccination dates were scheduled. Pursuant to this programme, all medical establishments are obliged to conduct annually wide inoculation campaigns. Within four years following the adoption of the programme, there had been eight vaccination campaigns, lasting for a period of 10 days, during which not only added immunization against specific infections was offered but also large-scale publicity on increasing popular awareness of the value of vaccines was distributed.

The national programme on reproductive health was endorsed by the Government in 1997. It will be implemented in 1997-2000 by the Ministry of Health and Social Care in cooperation with UNFPA and other international organizations.

Apart from adhering to a policy of preferential development in the health sector, the Government put forward in its action programme the following objectives: to expand the involvement of the State, individuals and business entities in the cause of health protection; to increase preventive measures against infectious diseases; to decrease by 50 per cent the rate of infant mortality, as compared with the 1995 level, through consistent reduction of maternal and child diseases; to widen the scope of projects implemented in collaboration with the United Nations specialized agencies; to better disburse related funds.

In meeting WHO goals in the "Health for All by the Year 2000 campaign", the Government not only designed new programmes, on *inter alia*, popular health education, the health of adolescents and the elderly, and fighting infectious diseases, but continued to execute its previous projects and programmes.

Discrimination of female workers employed in the health sector is non-existent in Mongolia. On the contrary, the majority of medical personnel are women, and they are provided with wide opportunities for comfort work, professional advancement and retraining.

The Government has been undertaking coherent measures directed at improving the scope and quality of medical service. In the past 10 years the number of obstetricians increased by 21 per cent. With a view to bringing health care even closer to the population, a system of household doctors was introduced in 1990.

With the onset of transition to a market economy, the health sector, which used to be funded 100 per cent from the State under the previous regime, began to encounter severe financial constraints, which have resulted in a 42 per cent decline in per capita State budget funding. Various measures are now being taken to maximize the effectiveness of funding and hence, to improve the quality of medical service. In the transfer to a multisector health-care system, the increasing number of private clinics has become a new impetus for widening and bettering the standard of medical service.

During these transitory years Mongolia has redefined its national strategy on reproductive health. Major attention is given to the issues of early medical supervision of pregnant women, treatment of female leukaemia and basic diseases, reduction of infant mortality, dissemination of knowledge about reproductive health, and contraception for both women and men.

In line with this strategy and the programme on healthy delivery administered by the Ministry of Health and Social Care and UNFPA, some positive results have already been achieved.

To date, upwards of 30 per cent of women of reproductive age use contraception; 90 per cent use the IUD, while the remaining 10 per cent use other methods of contraception. The number of abortions has risen, and the birth rate has declined.

Thirty-six and nine-tenths per cent of pregnant women have some sort of defect that might potentially lead to complications during pregnancy or delivery, and 44.4 per cent of them have deliveries under the supervision of professional obstetricians in the capital and provinces — 55.0 per cent under the supervision of medical assistants in *soums*. Although only a small percentage, 0.6 per cent, of all pregnant women have deliveries at home, it is alarming that the rate of maternal mortality among them is 20 per cent higher than that among women who give birth in hospitals.

Incidents of sexually transmitted and inflammatory diseases among women are quite widespread: 50.4 per cent of those with such diseases are unemployed, and 40-58 per cent are youth of 15-25 years old. Here the lack of knowledge on health protection, in particular among women, certainly plays a contributing factor. At the same time, it is essential to wage a campaign for improving hygiene, and especially to solve the problem of the deficient supply of clean water — the number one prerequisite for health.

Girls aged 0-15 represent one fifth of the population. Apart from setting up an adequate system for medical service for these girls, a variety of planned activities on educating boys and girls about reproductive health and sexual behaviour is being carried out.

In regard to the improvement of health of women and girls, the Government has been working on achieving the following objectives by the year 2000:

(a) Reduce maternal mortality by half, the mortality of infants under five by one third, and delivery complications by 70 per cent, compared to 1990 levels;

(b) Ensure 100 per cent coverage of all pregnant women by medical supervision, including 70 per cent during the first three months of pregnancy;

(c) Treat not less than 90 per cent of the pregnant women with anaemia with iron acid;

(d) Provide not less than 80 per cent of the population with clean water supply.

In the national programme on improving the status of women, specific objectives were put forward under the strategic thrust of bettering the scope and quality of reproductive health services, which include the following: to offer once every two years to all women preventive medical check-ups; to make them healthier; and to activate health advocacy, training, publicity, information dissemination and counselling for the general public. With the achievement of these goals, compliance with the pertinent provisions of the Convention shall be ensured at the national level.

Combating HIV/AIDS

Work on combating HIV/AIDS was first launched by the Government in cooperation with WHO in 1987. This year the HIV/AIDS Reference Centre, with a full-time staff and appropriate budget, opened.

Within the framework of the WHO project, implemented in three stages, national specialists have been undergoing training, both abroad and in-country; laboratories for analyses have been set up in provinces and towns; and the necessary equipment, instruments, chemical substances and diagnostic devices for analysis have been supplied to urban and rural areas. Under the same project, 3.3 million condoms have been distributed to people in high-risk groups. The National Committee on Combating HIV/AIDS was established in 1992, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and with subcommittees in the capital and provinces. The Committee discussed and approved the national programme on combating HIV/AIDS. The Law on Combating HIV/AIDS was passed by the State Great Hural in 1992.

Important regulations and instructions on such matters as HIV/AIDS and STD diagnostic standards, high-risk groups and their coverage by check-ups, advice to guardians of HIV/AIDS infected individuals, guidelines for activities on fighting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD), to be carried out by provincial health centres, have been given effect by the decrees of the Minister for Health and Social Care.

Annually, the average of 127,000-200,000 people identified as belonging to high-risk groups undergo medical check-ups; about 20,000-25,000 are tested.

A training of trainers for conducting educational work on HIV/AIDS and STD prevention for adolescents, for high-risk groups, and for the general public have been organized for all provincial and *soum* teachers of biology, with the distribution of pertinent handouts.

At the initiative of the Mongolian Women's Federation nationwide seminars on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STD for representatives of women's organizations have been conducted within the framework of the project on reproductive health.

The Mongolian Women's Federation also cooperates with WHO on the implementation of a small, $5,000 project for prostitutes regarding HIV/AIDS and STD.

It has become a tradition in Mongolia to commemorate World AIDS Day, with the active participation of youth and women's non-governmental organizations.

Activities on finding and treating infected female prisoners were organized in 1997. Since 1994 educating prostitutes, checking up on the street children, and providing necessary medical treatment has been carried out regularly in collaboration with women's and children's non-governmental organizations. Upwards of 200 female prisoners and prostitutes have been covered by these activities.

Two persons elected from Mongolian health care organizations participated in the Fourth Asia-Pacific Conference on HIV/AIDS (25-29 October 1997, Manila).

The Law on Combating HIV/AIDS, passed in 1994, does not contain any provisions that discriminate among women or affect their legitimate interests.

Involvement of nurses in the improvement of women's health

Nurses and midwives constitute 60 per cent of the workers with special secondary education employed in the health sector. They play a key role in disseminating health education among women, spreading knowledge on prevention of disease, reproductive health and family planning, and supervising pregnant women, advising, attending deliveries etc. As of 1996, 44 per cent of the female population of Mongolia underwent medical check-ups or treatment. With a view to involving nurses and midwives more actively in medical service for women and to upgrading their professional knowledge, training sessions under a UNFPA-funded project on reproductive health have already addressed 70 per cent of them.

The Ministry of Health and Social Care, along with the Association of Nurses, endeavours to achieve the objectives of the national programme on improving the status of women, in cooperation with the international organization for nurses, WHO and other United Nations specialized agencies, paying attention to increasing their role and responsibility in protecting the health of women and enhancing their professional knowledge and skills. Thus, nurses took part in the international seminar "Women's health: involvement of nurses", hosted by the International Nursing Federation of Japan in September 1997, and they now seek expansion of cooperation with that organization.

Part three. Miscellaneous issues

Violence against women and domestic violence

As mentioned above, any activity interfering with the rights and liberties of women, obstructing their pursuit of legitimate interests, are liable to appropriate punishment, according to the Criminal Code, Civil Code, Family Law, the Code of Criminal Procedure etc.

In the government report "The status of women and future objectives", presented at the national congress on "Women in social development", convened in the spirit of the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was noted that during the years of transition to a market economy, assaults on the rights and liberties of women were increasingly reported and negative phenomena attracting public attention tended to multiply.

In practice violence against women is expressed in the form of physical abuse, moral suppression, and sexual abuse.

Judging from data collected by law enforcement agencies, of late the rate of criminality has been rapidly growing. Thus, in the past 10 years the number of violent crimes has risen by 25.6 per cent. In the majority of instances it is women and children who are victimized. There is one serious crime — rape —

where women only can be the victim. It is disgusting that lately there have been reported cases of stepfathers or even fathers raping their minor daughters. The number of robberies against women is also in ascendance. Consumption of alcohol is identified as a major cause of crime.

Good collaborative efforts are being made on the part of women non-governmental organizations, the police, the judiciary and other members of the legal profession to provide medical, moral and legal counselling and assistance for women whose rights are infringed and who become victims of violence.

The recently established Centre against Violence, which has been operating for the past two years has already become one of the emergency addresses for women who need help and advice. As of end 1996, its central and branch shelter houses had serviced about 90 women and 80 children, one fourth of whom had higher education, as opposed to three fourths with special secondary education. A survey conducted in 1995 by the Centre with the Ministry of Population Policy and Labour (under its former name) covered 3,000 persons, 57.6 per cent of whom were women, and 31.4 per cent of them claimed to be under constant moral pressure due to family problems.

One of the main reasons for growing domestic violence, both in overt and covert forms, is in the lack of a legal and moral environment for effectively opposing it. Eighteen per cent of those who had sought forensic examinations and certification in 1995 were women, victims of physical abuse. Domestic violence explains an ever-increasing number of divorces and run-away street children. Thus combating all forms of violence against women is urgently needed in Mongolia.

Article 116 of the Criminal Code provides for imprisonment of up to three years or correction work for a period of not more than a year and a half for having sexual intercourse with a person under 16. Further, in article 111, the Code establishes criminal liability for involving others in prostitution and pornography, for raping (article 112), for an improper way of sexual satisfaction (article 113).

Domestic violence and crimes committed in family settings are not always on the surface; hence, they may easily be hidden, and in the end it is a woman who is victimized. It would not be false to say that in our country surveys on victimization are almost non-existent.

According to amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, a victim is not only a person who has suffered physical and/or material damage; he/she is one whose reputation and/or mental health are also impaired. Regrettably, the contemporary judicial practice establishes and provides regress, in the main, for physical and material damage, ignoring moral harm, which is rarely even claimed by victims themselves.

Combating prostitution

Although in 1990, when reporting on the implementation of the Convention, we stated that prostitution did not exist in Mongolia, we now have to admit its existence. Prostitution is one of the negative phenomena that has emerged in this transitory period and rightfully generates public condemnation.

According to selective surveys conducted by organizations concerned with prostitutes, 50.9 per cent of them have secondary education and 47.1 per cent are divorced. Respondents indicated that the main reason for them to go onto the street had been a call for survival, dictated by poverty. Only 2 per cent replied that prostitution had been their profession. A survey carried out in Ulaanbaatar revealed that a majority of prostitutes had been employed girls and young women aged 16-27. There were among them quite a few homeless, half-orphaned girls who had been compelled to engage in the business due to unbearable living conditions and pressure on the part of their stepparents. Again there were a number of jobless women who became involved in prostitution and pornography through their predilection for alcohol. Thus, 3 per cent of the crimes reported in the past three years have been committed by women, and 23.2 per cent of the victims of homicide were women.

Both governmental organizations and the non-governmental community carry out a variety of activities aimed at arranging for medical check-ups for prostitutes, giving moral advice, and condemning those responsible for their prostitution. At the initiative of the Government, the draft law on combating prostitution has been prepared and submitted to the State Great Hural.

In future it is necessary to study domestic violence as a type of legal offence, to train professionals to conduct such studies, to perfect the data collection, to organize training for members of the legal profession, to mobilize all concerned organizations — i.e., law enforcement agencies, cultural and educational institutions — to conduct an enlightenment campaign for boys and girls on ethics, and to fight alcoholism. One of the main ways of preventing domestic violence should be increasing public awareness — in particular, the knowledge of girls and women on self-defence. In this regard, non-governmental organizations such as the Mongolian Women Lawyers' Association and the Centre for Child's Rights display great enthusiasm. Still more needs to be done to help women, families and children affected by domestic violence.

Women and households, traditional approach and experience

Provisions of the Convention on the prohibition of discrimination against women and assurance of their equal rights in entering into marriage and in family relations are being observed in Mongolia on the basis of pertinent laws. The country acceded to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages in 1991.

Family law in Mongolia provides for marriages based on free consent and establishes 18 years as the minimum age. It guarantees the right of spouses to common ownership of property that has been acquired in marriage, their equal parental and spousal rights and duties before the family and children.

As of 1996, there were 518,000 households, with an average of 4.3 members in each. If one looks at the rate of marriage since 1990, a descending trend becomes apparent. In 1992, 18,323 couples registered their marriage; in 1994 the number reached only 15,922, and in 1996 it again dropped, to 14,200. As far as the rate of divorce is concerned, in the period 1990-1994 there had been a tendency towards reduction. Thus, in 1992, 984 divorces were registered; in 1994, there were 736. However, in the past two years, divorces have been increasing: in 1995 and 1996 there were 901 and 908, respectively. Eighty-nine per cent of divorced couples are located in urban areas; 78.6 per cent of divorces are said to have been caused by incompatibility of the partners, and 15.1 per cent by the excessive consumption of alcohol. The increasing number of single-mother families has already become an issue for the public attention.

In reality, many couples practice late registration of their marriages. Thus, there are many couples living together for from two to three years without a marriage certificate. At the same time there are many couples which divorced without registering their divorce. It is, therefore, necessary to improve the citizens' status registration.

In the state policy document on demography and the national programme on improving the status of women, there have been put forward a cluster of objectives to pursue activities aimed at supporting the family well-being, developing a Mongolian family and household study, passing on to the younger generation respect for national traditions, preserving the genetic pool of Mongolians, and preparing children for future independent life, labour, and equal participation of men and women in family.

To date, a revised draft family law has been submitted to the State Great Hural. Revisions affect mainly the areas of family property regulation, children's upbringing, and parental responsibility.

Governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with women, youth and children carry out many activities aimed not only at preserving humane traditions practised in Mongolian families and inherited from our ancestors, including reverence and care of parents, support for the poor, and respect for elderly and pregnant women, but also at enriching them in new settings and passing them on to future generations.